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An Apocalyptic Hermeneutic for Biblical Hospitality

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| Apocalyptic Hermeneutic | Hospitality | NT use of OT |
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ABSTRACT

Hospitality is often considered pluralism's bedfellow. Many scholars have undertaken a hermeneutic towards the Scriptures that views hospitality as unconditional and preference for the "other". This approach to understanding hospitality in Scripture has impacted responses to inter-faith dialogue, homosexuality, migration, and Christian mission. This hermeneutic is imposed upon the Abrahamic narratives and on the ministry and teachings of Jesus, caricaturing the protagonists as inclusive hosts.

This paper argues for a hermeneutic which takes into consideration the apocalyptic nature of narratives of Genesis 18 and 19 and their subsequent use in the New Testament. This places emphasis on the reception of the servant of God as "the guest", where acceptance is reciprocated with blessings, deliverance, and salvation; and the rejection of God's servant and message results in curses, destruction, and damnation. From this perspective, the Christian response to pluralistic and post-colonial readings of the Abrahamic and Gospel narratives must be challenged, while at the same time, guidance is needed in appropriating hospitality as part of the Church's mission.

INTRODUCTION

The subject of hospitality has largely been explored in Christian theology and philosophy over the last century, primarily in discussions concerning inter-religious dialogue, immigration, the marginalisation of homosexuals, and Christian mission. Many scholars, pioneered by French philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Paul Ricœur, have undertaken a hermeneutic towards the Scriptures that views hospitality as unconditional and gives preference towards the "other".¹ Marianne Moyaert, in her chapter on Biblical, Ethical, and Hermeneutical Reflections

on Narrative Hospitality, explains that "Ricœur regards hospitality primarily as a form of hermeneutical openness, which challenges growing tendencies of closure, exclusivism, and isolation."²

This hermeneutic is often imposed upon the Abrahamic narratives, and upon the ministry and teachings of Jesus, caricaturing the protagonists as inclusive hosts. Abraham, who is considered a patron of hospitality for his reception of three strangers in Genesis 18, provides a bridge for the Abrahamic religions to conform to the attitude of Abraham and share hospitality in a pluralistic setting.

1 See Volf, M. (1996). *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. Yong, A. (2008) *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbour*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. McLaren, B. D. (2012). *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth That Could Change Everything*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

2 Moyaert, M. (2011) "Biblical, Ethical, and Hermeneutical Reflections On Narrative Hospitality" in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions*, Kearney, R. and Taylor, J. (eds.) New York, NY: Continuum, 102

Likewise, Post-colonialists³ regard Jesus' reception of sinners and tax collectors in table-fellowship as radically inclusive towards those marginalised by society. Such readings impact practical issues within the church resulting in an inclusive model for mission. The exclusiveness of the gospel message is therefore vilified from Christian mission with a preference and emphasis on showing the love of God through social action in order to bring social justice.

In this paper I wish to look at an alternative hermeneutic that puts the gospel at the centre of hospitality and reflects a biblical theological pattern rather than imputing a worldview upon a text. I propose that Genesis 18, in relation to Genesis 19⁴, was interpreted with an apocalyptic hermeneutic by the synoptic Gospel writers in the pericopae of Jesus sending out the twelve (Matthew 10, Mark 6:7-13, and Luke 9:1-6) and the seventy-two disciples (Luke 10:1-16). When we read these New Testament texts in light of their Old Testament source, we will see that the Gospel writers portray Jesus' use of Genesis 18 and 19 as thoroughly apocalyptic and that the gospel message, when received or rejected through hospitality, results in either blessing and salvation or curse and destruction. Once our hermeneutic and texts have been established, I will then look at the application

3 Post-colonialism became popular in the 1990's as a form of Liberation Theology in reaction to Colonial Theology and Western thinking and interpretations of the Bible. The Scriptures were often viewed as a means to justify Western oppression of other cultures. The reaction influenced biblical interpretation to not only adopt non-western readings of the bible, but to look at scripture as a book that was against oppression and champions those marginalised in society. See Young, R. J. C. (2003) *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Also, McLeod, J. (2000) *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

4 Gordon Wenham argues that Genesis 18 and 19 form a clear unit within Genesis because of the narratives plot and structure. There are many parallels between the two chapters, as well as with Noah's story, which suggests the author is providing an intertextual reading to make his point. (Wenham, G. J. (1994) *Genesis 16-50*. WBC. Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 40-45.

to mission compared to the "hermeneutic of openness."

APOCALYPTIC HERMENEUTIC

First, we must define an apocalyptic hermeneutic. Dale Allison explains that the term "apocalyptic" is used in three different ways: firstly, apocalyptic is a literary genre containing revelation from an otherworldly being to a human recipient, which envisages eschatological salvation.⁵ This type of literature contains distinctive features that determine its genre. Writings such as 1 Enoch, Daniel, and Revelation contain heavenly visions and divine revelation through otherworldly mediators. Secondly, apocalyptic is described as a particular form of eschatology which places emphasis on signs, an expectation of a cosmic cataclysmic event, belief in the nearness of the Kingdom, and a concern for universal human history.⁶ Thirdly, apocalyptic can be described as a movement. Apocalypticism was a hypothetical movement thought to be short lived during the Second Temple Period that influenced the apocalyptic literature written during this period and various Jewish groups in theology such as the Qumran Community and Early Christianity.⁷

I believe a fourth category can be added to this list; apocalyptic as a hermeneutical approach. The common features of apocalypticism are, therefore, present in a method of interpretation. The apocalypticist draws upon both Scripture and history in order to interpret present day as part of the eschatological revealing of God's plan. An example of this hermeneutic

5 Allison Jr, D. C. (1992) "Apocalyptic" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Green, J. B., McKnight, S. and Marshall, I. H. (eds.) Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 17.

6 *Ibid*, 18.

7 *Ibid*, 19.

is found in a sectarian writing from the Dead Sea Scrolls, *Habakkuk Pesher* (1QpHab). This scroll interprets the book of Habakkuk in light of the Qumran community's current situation between the Wicked Priest and the Teacher of Righteousness. The commentary uses Habakkuk to show that prophecy is being fulfilled as the Wicked Priest persecutes the Teacher of Righteousness and perverts the Law of God. The commentary concludes by predicting judgement will come upon the wicked by the *Kittim* and that there would be a further eschatological judgement.

It is with this particular hermeneutic I believe that Jesus and the apostles interpreted the narrative of Genesis 18 and 19. One may accuse this hermeneutic of imputing a theological ideology onto the text, but this is not the case. Genesis 18 and 19 warrant an apocalyptic interpretation because of the apocalyptic features of the content of both chapters.

GENESIS 18 AND 19

The narrative begins with the appearance of the Lord to Abraham, which expresses divine revelation fundamental to apocalypticism. In this case, His appearance is rather ambiguous because the relationship between Genesis 18 verse 1 and verse 2 is unclear. In verse 2 Abraham lifts his eyes and sees three men passing by and it is difficult to determine whether the text is insinuating that one of these three men is the Lord or that Abraham is conversing with the Lord who is speaking from heaven. The ambiguity of the text means both are possible, and perhaps from a Christian perspective both are true.

Theologians have speculated about the identity of the three guests for centuries.

Some believe that the three guests were mere wayfarers⁸. The text, of course, refers to the three guests as men; however, we may note that in Daniel 9:21 that the angel Gabriel is referred to as a man. In Jewish tradition the three guests are identified as the three Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael.⁹ It is thought that two of these guests were the two angels described in Genesis 19 that continue on to Sodom. In Christian tradition, two of the guests are angels but the third is thought to be a Christophany, a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Lord Jesus.¹⁰ Christian interpreters come to this conclusion because Abraham calls one of the guests Lord and bows before the guest, an act usually discouraged by angels in other parts of Scripture (Revelation 19:10, 22:9).¹¹

Angels are a prominent feature of apocalyptic writings. They are the otherworldly beings mediating revelation from God to human recipients. In Genesis 18 the three guests give a prophetic message to Abraham that when they return in a year's time Sarah will give birth to a son.¹²

8 Moyaert agrees with Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks that the three guests were men (Moyaert, 96-97).

9 Josephus describes the three guests as angels in *Antiquities* (1.11.2). The Talmud identifies these angels "one was Michael, to inform Sarah she would have a son; the second was Raphael, to heal Abraham's circumcision; and the third was Gabriel, to overthrow Sodom." (*Bava Metzia* 86b).

10 Kaiser, W. C. (1998). *The Christian and the "Old" Testament*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 38. This view can be traced to Justin Martyr (100-165 AD) in *Dialogue with Trypho*.

11 Also note that in Acts, Peter was worshipped by Cornelius (Acts 10:20-23) and Paul and Barnabus were worshipped by the people in Lystra (Acts 14:8-18). In both cases the men of God refused to be worshipped as they were just men, and encouraged their devotees to worship God alone.

12 Timetables are an important part of apocalyptic literature. These timetables usually revolved around religious calendars. An example is the Book of Jubilees which is a rewritten work of Genesis which emphasises the prophetic timetable of God according to years of Jubilee. It is interesting to note that according to Jewish tradition, Isaac was born on the 15th Nisan (Passover).

A second revelation is then proclaimed by the three guests in Genesis 18:20-21, warning of imminent judgement upon Sodom and Gomorrah. A feature within apocalyptic writings is the immanency of a cataclysmic event. The prophecy usually contains promises of salvation to the righteous and warnings of judgement on the wicked. The description of fire and brimstone raining down on Sodom paints a vivid apocalyptic picture of God's wrath upon the wicked. Genesis 19:24 describes the fire and brimstone as coming "out of heaven". An open heaven and heavenly visions are a fundamental feature for apocalyptic literature, especially God's wrath revealed from heaven.

Another feature of apocalypticism in this passage of Scripture is the question of theodicy. Stephen Travis explains that "the crucial concern of apocalyptists was the problem of theodicy".¹³ In Genesis 18 Abraham questions the destruction of Sodom for the sake of the innocent and the righteous that live in that city. In verse 23 Abraham asks "will You destroy the righteous along with the wicked?" Abraham continues in verse 25, "should the Judge of the whole earth do what is Just?" So, Abraham is able to convince God to save the city if there are at least ten righteous people in the city. Unfortunately, there weren't ten righteous in the city. But God did not allow the few righteous to perish in the city with the wicked. The angels took hold of Lot and his family and fled to the mountains as God destroyed the city. The immanency of judgement upon Sodom required the angels to visit Sodom with a message of warning. This message was received by Lot and his family through his hospitality of the two angels, whereas the other residents of Sodom rejected the angel's message by wanting

to do harm to them. Therefore, Hospitality of God's messengers brought blessing to Abraham in the form of his son and salvation to Lot and his family from Sodom. The rejection of God's messengers and the message brought destruction to Sodom.

The pattern of blessing and salvation for receiving God's people and curses and destruction for rejecting them is present throughout the book of Genesis, in particular the other Abrahamic narratives. Abraham was not only the archetypical host but was also a sojourner, a Hebrew¹⁴, a guest. He was to be a vehicle for blessing the nations and his reception would be key to receiving those blessing, but his rejection would result in curses.

In Genesis 12 God makes a covenant with Abraham and promises to bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse Abraham; and through him all the nations will be blessed (v3). Sarita Gallagher identifies the function of the Abrahamic covenant in the reception of Abraham in Canaan, Egypt, and Philistia.¹⁵ Gallagher notes that in cases like the misappropriation of Abraham's wife by Pharaoh resulted in a curse (Genesis 12:14-17).¹⁶ Likewise, the blessings of Abraham came upon those who allied themselves with Abraham. The four Kings who went out to battle, and the Amorite brothers who joined Abraham, were blessed from the booty from the battle (Genesis 14:22-24).¹⁷

So, we can see from Genesis that a theme concerning hospitality regarding apocalyptic blessings and curses is part of a biblical

13 Travis, S. H. (1979) "The Value of Apocalyptic" *Tyndale Bulletin* 30, 57.

14 Scholars believe "Hebrew" was an ancient designation for foreigners related "Haribu", which is a word found in ancient texts to describe displaced people.

15 Gallagher, S. D. (2013). "Blessings on the Move: The Outpouring of God's Blessings through the Migrant Abraham" in *Mission Studies* 30, 155.

16 *Ibid*, 155.

17 *Ibid*, 153-154.

metanarrative. Space does not allow me to present a complete biblical theology from Genesis to Revelation on this thesis¹⁸; however, it is worth noting that this theme is consistent with the blessings and curses of the Law through Israel (Deuteronomy 30:7-9), the reception of the prophets¹⁹, and the reception of Jesus and his Church.

THE SENDING OUT OF THE TWELVE AND THE SEVENTY-TWO DISCIPLES

Similar apocalyptic features and allusions to the narrative of Genesis 18 and 19 are found in the pericopae of Jesus sending out the twelve and seventy-two disciples, which would indicate that the Gospel writers relied upon the reader's knowledge of those chapters. I previously noted that each of the Synoptic Gospels share this same narrative in one form or another. Luke's account offers an expanded version of events and includes the sending out of the seventy-two; however, Matthew provides some interestingly unique detail as well.

The narrative begins with Jesus sending the twelve disciples out in twos to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, to heal the sick, and to cast out devils (Matthew 10:1, Mark 6:7, Luke 9:1-2). He instructs the disciples to take nothing with them on their journey- no money, no food, and no extra clothes (Matthew 10:9-10, Mark 6:8-9, Luke 9:3). This puts the disciples at the

mercy of hospitality as they travelled from town to town. Jesus gives instructions concerning being received and rejected. In Luke's account, Jesus only instructs that the disciples stay for a short time where they have been received (Luke 9:4). Matthew's version provides a few further instructions that are worth highlighting. Jesus tells them to find someone who is trustworthy and stay with them. Once the disciples depart, they would bless the household (Matthew 10:12). The reception of the disciples and the acceptance of the gospel of the Kingdom brought blessings to those who had received it.

Alternatively, when the disciples were not received by a city they are to "shake the dust" from their feet as a testimony against that city (Matthew 10:14, Mark 6:11, Luke 9:5). Various scholars have highlighted a rabbinic teaching that the dust from Gentile lands carries defilement, which would require strict Jews to remove their sandals when they returned from foreign lands.²⁰ This symbolic act from Jesus and his disciples declared that Jews who rejected the Kingdom were no better than the Gentiles. Those who reject the disciples, therefore, rejected the gospel message, and rejected Jesus (Matthew 10:40, Luke 10:16).

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus makes a reference to Sodom and Gomorrah concerning the cities that reject the twelve disciples. Jesus said "Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgement for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town." (Matthew 10:15, ESV)²¹ Luke's account differs from Matthew and Mark as the reference to Sodom isn't made in the sending out of the twelve (Luke 9:1-6) but is present in the sending out of the seventy-two (Luke 10:12). The reference

18 For an Old Testament theology on Abrahamic blessings and curses and their trajectories see Anderson, J. S. (2014). *The Blessing and the Curse: Trajectories in the Theology of the Old Testament*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

19 This ultimately led to the exile prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah for rejecting the word of the Lord (Isaiah 5:13, Jeremiah 20:6). Likewise, Nineveh received salvation when they listened to the prophetic word through Jonah (Jonah 3:9-10) but received judgement at a later date when they went back to their old ways (Nahum 2:8, 3:7; Zephaniah 2:13).

20 Bock, D. L. (1994). *Luke 1:1-9:50*. BCNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 817.

21 Mark 6:11 also contains reference to Sodom and Gomorrah.

is also expanded to include the judgement of contemporary cities that rejected the gospel of the Kingdom, comparing them to gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon.

I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. 16 "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

(Luke 10: 12-16, ESV)

The judgement upon these cities are eschatological and immersed in apocalyptic language. The fiery destruction of Sodom was already a biblical motif in Scripture for God's judgement of the wicked (Deuteronomy 29:23, Isaiah 13:19, Jeremiah 49:18, Lamentations 4:6, Amos 4:11, Zephaniah 2:9), but was used in the New Testament in describing the eschatological judgement (2 Peter 2:6, Jude 1:7). Chorazin and Bethsaida's judgement is even worse than Sodom and will be brought down to Hades because of their own exaltation to heaven. Interestingly, upon the return of the seventy-two from their journey they rejoiced in the fact that they were able to cast out demons (Luke 10:17); however, Jesus tells them that He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18), an allusion to Isaiah 14:12 which refers to the Morning star falling to the pit after his own exaltation. Such a vision and reference of a spiritual battle reflect the dualistic expressions that feature in apocalyptic writings. The preaching of the Kingdom was to thwart the evil one and accompanied by the act of casting out

Satan. The rejection of this mission would result in the same fate as Satan, which was judgement in Hades.

So, from the sending out of the twelve and seventy-two disciples we can see that the acceptance or rejection of God's messengers result either in blessings and salvation, or curses and destruction in similar fashion to the acceptance and rejection of the angels in Genesis 18 and 19.

APOCALYPTIC HOSPITALITY AND CHRISTIAN MISSION

So, how does an apocalyptic hermeneutic on the Abrahamic and Gospel narratives impact Christian mission compared to the hermeneutic of openness provided through pluralism and post-colonialism? Pluralistic and postcolonial readings of the Abrahamic and gospel narratives focus on the Christian being the host to the world rather than the guest. Those who propagate these views believe the Church can bring change through social action by welcoming people with unconditional hospitality. An example of the impact of such a view was demonstrated recently in Sweden where the Bishop of Stockholm recently proposed the removal of all signs of the cross from a church in her diocese near the Eastern dockyard where there is an influx of traders and immigrants passing through who belong to different faiths.²² In her blog, the Bishop of Stockholm Eva Brunne refers to the travellers as angels and cites Hebrews 13:2, a verse that scholars believe is related to Genesis 18 and 19.²³

Yet, our reading of the Abrahamic and

22 <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/10/05/worlds-first-lesbian-bishop-calls-church-remove-crosses-install-muslim-prayer-space/>

23 <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=1318087>

Gospel narratives indicate that it is the Christian who is a guest in the world, a sojourner, a pilgrim. The application to mission then differs to that of pluralism and post-colonialism. The Christian is to go out into the world with the ultimate revelation of God, which is that Jesus Christ died for their sins and rose on the third day conquering sin and death, and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. (1 Corinthians 5:1-4; John 3:16). The message of the cross, therefore, is central to the mission of the church and should not be vilified in favour of building bridges with other faiths. Christian mission should avoid a hermeneutic of openness and recognise clear boundaries, set by God, proclaiming salvation through accepting Christ and His good news, including warning people that rejection brings judgement and damnation.

Contrary to Brunne's analogy, it is Christians who are the messengers like the angels and the apostles, and not peoples of other faiths. Christians are the one who hold the revelation of God and bring an invitation to the Kingdom for others to receive the hospitality of God. This scenario is illustrated beautifully in the Parable of the Wedding Banquet in Matthew 22, where the King sends his servants out to invite guests who were both good and evil, from places of distinction to the highways and byways (Matthew 22:9-10). The invitation was for everyone without partiality. Many rejected the invitation by mocking and even killing the servants, thus incurring the wrath of the King (Matthew 22:5-7). Some accepted the invitation but did not come appropriately dressed for the occasion (Matthew 22:11-12). The parable is summarised by Jesus with the famous saying "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). Andrew McGowen explains "The banquet is universal in scope, but selective in

application".²⁴ This is contrary to the view of hermeneutical openness that decrees that the banquet is universal with no regard to holiness or boundaries and yet, ironically, marginalises the gospel and Christians who believe Jesus is the only way to salvation.

The Christian's mission of preaching the gospel presents the universal scope by reaching out to every man, woman, and child regardless of race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation; however, it is the King who accepts or rejects into the fold those who are invited, not the Christian messenger. The disciples made this mistake when they were rejected from entering a Samaritan city in Luke 9:52-56. James and John turn to Jesus and said "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"²⁵ James and John were referring to the wrath that God brought on Sodom for the rejection of the angels. They had forgot the Lord's instruction that when they are rejected by a city they should shake the dust off their feet and move on. It is not the Christian's responsibility to call fire down from heaven.²⁶

24 McGowen, A. (2005) "Dangerous Eating? Jesus, Inclusion, and Communion". *Liturgy* Vol. 20 Issue 4, 16.

25 There is a textual variant at the end of Luke 9:54 that includes the words "as Elijah also did". This is thought to be a later gloss on the text from some "extraneous source, written or oral". Likewise, Jesus' rebuke is also thought to contain the additional words, "do you not know what manner of Spirit you are?" (Metzger, B. M. (1971). *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. London: United Bible Societies, 148). Although Elijah did call down fire from heaven to consume two armies in 2 Kings 1:10-14 and also in 1 Kings 18:20-39 where Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to call fire from heaven. In both narratives, the call of fire from heaven was to prove that Yahweh was God and Elijah his prophet and not just because of the rejection of God and his messenger. Bock writes that the reference to fire from heaven in Luke 9:54 is more than likely to recall the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 970), therefore, I believe the Luke 9:54 is an allusion to Genesis 19 rather than 2 Kings 1:10-14.

26 It is awarded to the two witnesses in Revelation 11:5 that fire will proceed out of their mouth to devour their enemies if they are harmed. Greg Beale argues that the fire is metaphorical and is an allusion to Jeremiah 5:14, "I have given my words in your mouth [as] fire... and it will

Rather, when the gospel is rejected in a town or city, Christians should shake the dust of their feet and move on.

The world will be judged for how they treat God's people. The question of theodicy for Christians today is when will God bring an end to the suffering and violence against his people? We read that the nations will be judged for how they treat the Jews (Joel 3:2). We also read that judgement will come upon those who persecute Christians and that the blood of the martyrs cry out to the Lord for vengeance (Revelation 6:9-17). It is in our time that thousands of Christians are killed by groups such as ISIS and Islamic governments. It is in our time Christians are being sent to prison by totalitarian regimes like North Korea. It is our time that once Christian Western nations have Christian businesses and Christian employees taken to court for standing by their beliefs. In this vision of openness and inclusiveness the world propagates, the gospel is marginalised, and Christians find themselves excluded and isolated. Just as Jesus declared woe upon His contemporary cities, Chorazin and Bethsaida, for the rejection of His disciples, likewise there will be woe upon the United Kingdom and the United States of America when Christians shake the dust from their feet. These two so-called Christian nations who have had the Scriptures proclaimed within them for centuries, have exalted themselves above heaven and will consequently one day receive a worse judgement than Sodom.

Christians should not cheer or gloat about the fate of those who reject Christ. Jesus wept for Jerusalem when he entered the city before

consume them". Similarly, two angels guiding Enoch in 2 Enoch 1:5 are portrayed as having "out of their mouths... fire coming forth". (Beale, G. K. (1999). *The Book of Revelation*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm b. Eerdmans Publishing, 580) If there is a possibility that one may take the fire proceeding from the witnesses mouths literally, the event is unique to them and for their protection only, not a means of judging people for rejecting their prophecy.

His crucifixion because of their rejection of the prophets who they had killed and the forthcoming rejection of Himself as Messiah (Matthew 23:37-38). Jerusalem suffered the consequences for rejecting Jesus when the city was destroyed in 70 AD. Yet, after Jesus wept He remembered the promise that upon His return Israel will accept Him by saying "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:39). We should weep for our nation and the rejection of the gospel, but also be fervent in our endeavours with the hope that one day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess Jesus Christ as Lord. (Philippians 2:10-11)

CONCLUSION

The use of an apocalyptic hermeneutic when reading the Abrahamic and Gospel narratives places the gospel at the centre of God's interaction with man, providing blessings and salvation on acceptance, or curses and destruction if rejected. This provides a more honest approach for a biblical theology of hospitality. This theology forms a model for Christian mission that should move away from the modern tendency to bring social justice by removing barriers and vilifying the message of the cross.

Norman Young writes:

Social action becomes pointless without this apocalyptic vision because there are no grounds in past history of expecting a lasting change for the better in human affairs. Only belief in God as one who breaks in against the possibilities resident within human history can provide the hope that makes any present reforming action worth the effort.²⁷

It was God's revelation in human history,

27 Young, N. (1976) *Creator, Creation, and Faith*. London: Collins, 72.

which came in the form of His Son Jesus and His atoning work on the cross that changed the course of history. A Christianity that views the cross as an obstacle rather than a doorway is powerless. We should not be ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16).

As Christians, we are the otherworldly messengers to the lost people of this world. We are the guests, sojourners, and pilgrims. The Christian's mandate is to preach the gospel, the immanency of the Kingdom, and warn of the coming judgement. Future Christian missions, therefore, should rely on an apocalyptic hermeneutic and centred on taking the revelation of Jesus into the highways and byways. Only the climax of the apocalyptic vision of the Kingdom of God come, can there be any chance of genuine change, genuine peace, and genuine justice.

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